

HONORING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, OFFICE OF STRUCTURE MAINTENANCE, AND INVESTIGATIONS

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the dedicated professionals of the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Office of Structure Maintenance and Investigations, (SM&I), which is marking its 80th anniversary of service to the people of the Golden State.

In 1927, while Babe Ruth swatted 60 home runs and Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic Ocean solo, the State of California showed the wisdom and foresight to create a special branch of engineering experts to ensure the safety and reliability of its State highways and bridges.

Babe Ruth's home run mark fell in 1961 to the bat of Roger Maris and air travel over the "pond" became a routine occurrence. All the while, California's bridge maintenance program has stood the test of time and continues to deliver on its mission of providing Californians with a safe and dependable network of bridges carrying traffic and pedestrians over rivers, canyons, railroads, highways and city streets all across the Golden State.

That effort is still paying dividends for California and the Nation. More than 24,000 State and local agency bridges in California reliably serve millions of travelers and billions of dollars of commerce because of the ongoing care provided by Structure Maintenance and Investigations staff. These structures run the gamut from the majestic San Francisco-Oakland Bay and San Diego-Coronado bridges to the historic arch spans along the scenic Monterey Coast and the tens of thousands of unassuming concrete, steel and timber bridges dotting the California landscape. The safety and reliability of California's bridges has been instrumental in fueling one of the world's largest economies. More than 160 million vehicle trips are recorded on California's transportation system each day.

Caltrans Structure Maintenance and Investigations engineering personnel have conducted more than 650,000 routine inspections and thousands of special hydraulic, steel and underwater bridge inspections since 1927. They look for any signs of deterioration, fatigue or distress in bridge decks, superstructures and substructures, and the office has initiated tens of millions of dollars in repairs to ensure the safety and structural integrity of each public agency bridge in California.

Thanks to the ongoing dedication of the Structure Maintenance and Investigations professionals, no public agency bridge in California has ever collapsed due to neglect. The bridge inspection program pioneered by Structure Maintenance & Investigations has become the model for transportation agencies around the Nation and the world.

As part of its ongoing bridge maintenance program, Structure Maintenance and Investigations maintains a library of more than one million documents, some dating back more than 100 years, documenting the history of each public agency bridge in California.

Structure Maintenance and Investigations personnel have responded in a timely and heroic fashion to a myriad of natural and man-made disasters to protect public safety and complete any needed repairs to California's transportation system. While their efforts have been well chronicled in major disasters such as the 1989 Loma Prieta and 1994 Northridge earthquakes, SM&I personnel routinely answer the call to protect public safety. Such a case occurred last year in California's Sonoma County where two engineers risked their own safety to inspect the Highway 128 bridge over the rampaging Russian River near Geyserville. The engineers determined that the floodwaters had compromised the integrity of the bridge. They closed the structure and initiated a project that resulted in construction of a new bridge.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, it is appropriate for us to convey to all the dedicated professionals at the California Department of Transportation's Office of Structure Maintenance and Investigations the thanks of a grateful State for years of dedicated service ensuring the safety and reliability of California's transportation system.

RECOGNIZING THE SUBURBAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF SUMMIT, NEW PROVIDENCE, AND BERKELEY HEIGHTS, NEW JERSEY

HON. MIKE FERGUSON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

Mr. FERGUSON. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the Suburban Chamber of Commerce of Summit, New Providence, and Berkeley Heights, New Jersey as it celebrates its 90th Anniversary Gala this evening.

Since 1917, the Suburban Chamber of Commerce has been serving local business interests in and around the city of Summit. The Chamber is a fixture in the community, serving the interests of a wide variety of businesses and professionals, and providing valuable help to charitable organizations.

For the past 25 years the Chamber has overseen the Suburban Chambers Foundation, a charitable organization whose most important projects include scholarships for graduates of Summit, New Providence and Berkeley Heights high schools, and the Vest-A-Cop program which helps pay the costs of bullet-proof vests for local police officers.

The Chamber plays a key role in developing and bringing the community together. Each year it promotes numerous local events and charities, including the Summit Summer Street Fair, Santa's Arrival, First Night® Summit, the New Providence Christmas Walk, the Berkeley Heights Fall Festival, and May is Pride in Berkeley Heights.

I am proud that the 7th District that I represent is home to a fine organization so dedicated to fostering community, and I am pleased to honor the Chamber's 90th anniversary today.

TRIBUTE TO RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas for its innovation in water conservation. Roger Kiker, a civil engineer at the base, and his staff have saved taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars with their water conservation efforts. Their ingenuity in implementing an automatic meter reading (AMR) system and other infrastructure improvements have relieved some drought concerns in the San Antonio area, which relies solely on the Edwards Aquifer for water.

Mr. Kiker and the Randolph Air Force Base have proven to be leaders in water conservation and environmental protection. Randolph Air Force Base has reduced its water consumption by 6.1 percent and saved over 117,000,000 gallons of water this year by reusing water, planting drought tolerant landscaping, and fixing leaky meter infrastructure.

This week, Mr. Kiker and Randolph Air Force Base will receive a 2007 Presidential Award for Leadership in Federal Energy Management for water conservation. I commend them for their success in this project and hope others will follow suit in preserving our precious natural resources.

90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 147TH FIGHTER WING ELLINGTON FIELD, TEXAS

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, in the United States, we have an incredible history, especially when it comes to our Armed Forces. Today, I want to recognize one of Houston's own, the 147th Fighter Wing/111th Fighter Squadron Texas Air National Guard out of Ellington Field, Texas. Their distinguished accomplishments during times of war and peace have made them well-known not only in Texas, but across the globe.

The 111th Aero Squadron met its beginnings at Kelly Field on Aug. 14, 1917. However, it was not until June 29, 1923, that the Squadron moved to its current location, Ellington Field. During the same year, they were designated a part of the Texas National Guard under the title of the 111th Observation Squadron, 36th Division.

Their emblem, which is one of the oldest in the United States Air Force, known as the Ace-In-The-Hole, signifies their interconnectedness to the State of Texas. Its immortal stance in Texas culture results from the grandfathering of the insignia at its inception. This motion works to prevent any future alteration to the historical design.

On Sept. 25, 1940, as the country was on the brink of World War II, the 111th became part of the federal war effort. Soon thereafter, the Squadron was reintroduced as part of the 68th Observation Group.